

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) A seasoning produced by interacting one or more microorganisms having protein hydrolysis potency with raw materials containing vegetable protein, wherein the hydrolysis ratio to amino acids is 65% or more; the isobutyl alcohol concentration is 0.1 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; the n-butyl alcohol concentration is 0.25 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; the isoamyl alcohol concentration is 0.5 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; and the acetic acid concentration is 100 mg per gram of nitrogen or less.

2. (Withdrawn) The seasoning according to claim 1, wherein the raw material containing vegetable protein is defatted soybean.

3. (Withdrawn) The seasoning according to claim 1, wherein said one or more microorganisms are filamentous fungi which belong to the genus *Aspergillus*.

4. (Withdrawn) The seasoning according to claim 3, wherein at least one of the microorganisms is selected from the group consisting of *Aspergillus oryzae* and *Aspergillus sojae*.

5. (Currently Amended) A process of producing a seasoning comprising:

(i) preparing solid koji by inoculating one or more microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency in raw materials containing vegetable protein; and

(ii) hydrolyzing the protein by adding a solution to the resulting solid koji ~~at an amount approximating to a salt concentration not inhibiting the hydrolysis of the protein at a~~ sodium chloride concentration of 5% by weight or less to form unrefined soy and then fermenting the unrefined soy,

wherein a lactic acid bacterium is added at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of raw material to the raw materials at the step (i) and at the step (ii), a lactic acid bacterium is added at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of unrefined soy to the unrefined soy, and

wherein the seasoning is at a hydrolysis ratio to amino acids at 65% or more; an isobutyl alcohol concentration at 0.1 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an n-butyl alcohol concentration at 0.25 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an isoamyl alcohol concentration at 0.5 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; and an acetic acid concentration at 100 mg per gram of nitrogen or less.

6. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 5, wherein the salt sodium chloride concentration in the unrefined soy in (ii) is 5% by weight or less.

7. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein the raw material containing vegetable protein is defatted soybean.

8. (Original) The process according to claim 7, wherein the defatted soybean is modified and swelled in extruder to a nitrogen solution index (NSI) of 8 to 20.

9. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein (ii) is carried out at 5 to 45°C for 40 to 144 hours.

10. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein the unrefined soy in (ii) is at pH 4 to 10.

11. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein nitrogen of a volume 2- to 10-fold the volume of the headspace of the fermentation tank is purged to the headspace above the unrefined soy and then the tank is sealed in (ii).

12. (Original) The process according to claim 11, wherein the volume of nitrogen is 5- to 8-fold the volume of the headspace of the tank.

13. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein said one or more microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency are filamentous fungi which belong to the genus *Aspergillus*.

14. (Original) The process according to claim 13, wherein at least one of the microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency is selected from the group consisting of *Aspergillus oryzae* and *Aspergillus sojae*.

15. (Original) The process according to claim 5, where the lactic acid bacterium is *Lactococcus lactis*.

16. (Original) The process according to Claim 15, wherein said lactic acid bacterium is *L. lactis* FERM BP-08552.

17. (New) A process of producing a seasoning comprising:

(i) preparing solid koji by inoculating one or more microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency in raw materials containing vegetable protein; and

(ii) hydrolyzing the protein by adding a solution to the resulting solid koji at a sodium chloride concentration of 5% by weight or less to form unrefined soy and then fermenting the unrefined soy,

(iii) filtering the unrefined to remove solids contained therein, and

(iv) sterilizing the filtered soy

wherein a lactic acid bacterium is added at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of raw material to the raw materials at the step (i) and at the step (ii), a lactic acid bacterium is added at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of unrefined soy to the unrefined soy, and

wherein the seasoning is at a hydrolysis ratio to amino acids at 65% or more; an isobutyl alcohol concentration at 0.1 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an n-butyl alcohol concentration at 0.25 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an isoamyl alcohol concentration at 0.5 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; and an acetic acid concentration at 100 mg per gram of nitrogen or less.

18. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein the sodium chloride concentration in the unrefined soy in (ii) is 5% by weight or less.

19. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein the raw material containing vegetable protein is defatted soybean.

20. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the defatted soybean is modified and swelled in extruder to a nitrogen solution index (NSI) of 8 to 20.

21. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein (ii) is carried out at 5 to 45°C for 40 to 144 hours.

22. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein the unrefined soy in (ii) is at pH 4 to 10.

23. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein nitrogen of a volume 2- to 10-fold the volume of the headspace of the fermentation tank is purged to the headspace above the unrefined soy and then the tank is sealed in (ii).

24. (New) The process according to claim 23, wherein the volume of nitrogen is 5- to 8-fold the volume of the headspace of the tank.

25. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein said one or more microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency are filamentous fungi which belong to the genus *Aspergillus*.

26. (New) The process according to claim 25, wherein at least one of the microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency is selected from the group consisting of *Aspergillus oryzae* and *Aspergillus sojae*.

27. (New) The process according to claim 17, where the lactic acid bacterium is *Lactococcus lactis*.

28. (New) The process according to Claim 27, wherein said lactic acid bacterium is *L. lactis* FERM BP-08552.

29. (New) The process according to Claim 27, wherein said sterilizing is at a temperature ranging from 60 to 120°C.

SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 5 and 6 have been amended.

Claims 17-29 have been added.

The amendment to Claims 5 and 6 are supported by page 13, lines 15-17 and Example 4 on page 24 of the specification. Claims 17-29 are supported by original Claims 5-16, page 13, lines 15-17, page 16, lines 18-22 and the Examples (see, for example, Example 1 at page 18, lines 12-18 and Example 4 on page 24).

No new matter has been added by the present amendment.